

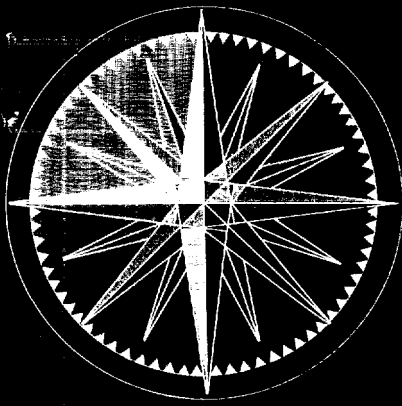
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# SPECIAL REPORT

THE SOVIET REGIME AND CULTURAL NONCONFORMITY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
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**THE SOVIET REGIME AND CULTURAL NONCONFORMITY**

In the fifteen months since he demanded conformity from all intellectuals at the party plenum on ideology, Khrushchev has been preoccupied with other problems and has had little time for personal intervention in the cultural field. Without his participation, the drive for orthodoxy waned rapidly as most of the liberal writers who had been criticized for nonconformity returned to print. The regime has reverted to a position of relative neutrality, tolerating literary nonconformity and public quarrels between liberal and conservative intellectuals, rather than attempting to muffle or silence them.

The June 1963 Plenum

At the central committee plenum on ideology in June 1963, Khrushchev and other speakers harshly attacked the nonconformity of the intelligentsia and the indifferent attitude of the youth. Khrushchev warned that those who failed to join in the struggle for Communism would be given no quarter, and recalled Taras Bulba who killed his own son because he went over to the side of the enemy. Despite the assurances that the party really meant what it said, the administrative measures which had been widely discussed before and during the plenum to improve control mechanisms in the arts and literature were not enacted. The session thus ended on an inconclusive note. The leadership was clearly caught between a need to do something about the increasingly insidious expression of lack of support for its ideals and its fear of endangering the psychological gains achieved since Stalin's death.

Divided councils within the leadership itself were at the root of the sharp zig-zags in Soviet cultural policy which had preceded the plenum and may have contributed to the central committee's indecisive action. In mid-October 1962, Khrushchev reportedly had told a group of writers that there were some officials just waiting for him to die. They then intended to bring Stalin back, "but I will destroy them so that there will be nothing to bring back and no one to bring him back to." At that time, he encouraged a program of literary works embodying discussions of Stalin's crimes. In this, he was probably supported by Mikoyan and opposed --unsuccessfully--by his then heir apparent Kozlov, and by the veteran ideologist Suslov.

A New Cultural Thaw

Liberal writers produced a flood of fiction detailing the crimes of "the cult of Stalin's personality." They also

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joined forces with liberal cinematographers in a new effort to purge conservative writers and critics who had achieved their positions of power by denouncing their Jewish colleagues during the Stalin purges.

This new attack on Stalinism would quickly dissipate, however, in the wake of a major crisis. In late October, President Kennedy revealed that strategic missiles were being deployed in Cuba and within six days Khrushchev capitulated, leaving himself exposed to ridicule from all sides. As a result, Soviet policy entered a period of retrenchment and re-evaluation that lasted throughout the winter. Khrushchev, clearly on the defensive, was apparently obliged to change his tactics in order to reduce his vulnerability to domestic attack.

The lid was not forced down all at once, however, although Khrushchev was in no mood to experiment further with de-Stalinization. As late as 23 November, he attempted to show continuity with his past policies by defending publication of Yevtushenko's "Stalin's Heirs" and Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich." He even claimed that he had overruled suggestions by other members of the leadership that portions of "Ivan" be cut.

The conservative writers, however, were quick to realize that the situation was changing. Their first aim was to protect their associates who had been under attack for their denunciations during the Stalin era.

The conservatives apparently appealed to Kozlov to intercede with Khrushchev who, by this time, was undoubtedly receptive, and probably shared the conservatives' antisemitism. He probably also recognized the danger to the leadership of establishing a precedent of retribution for crimes committed in the Stalin years. In any event, the campaign to oust the conservatives came to an end after only six weeks.

**The Crackdown**

Khrushchev had not said anything in October about liberalization in the graphic arts or in music. By analogy, however, hopes had been aroused for a thaw in these fields as well. Moreover, Minister of Culture Furtseva and Khrushchev's son-in-law Adzhubey appear to have favored such a thaw and had been quietly encouraging young artists.

On 1 December, however, their hopes were abruptly dashed. Khrushchev, already angry over liberal attacks on the anti-semitic writers and now on the defensive, was invited to an exhibit arranged by the conservatives at the Manezh Museum. Suddenly confronted with extreme examples of modern Soviet art, he exploded with rage, and after two meetings in which his spokesmen demanded orthodox socialist realism in art and music, most artists and musicians fell back into line.

The writers, however, did not interpret this crackdown as a sign of the times for them.

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Stalin's crimes continued to be treated in fiction, and the problems of the guilt of Stalin's "executors" and the moral guilt of those who had failed to protest injustice to others were raised in literary publications. The prerevolutionary theme of conflict between fathers and sons was revived. Soviet youth were depicted as rejecting parental discipline and charging the older generation with complicity in the crimes of the "cult" years.

In March, Khrushchev opened a full-scale attack. He warned against emphasizing the suffering caused by Stalin and ignoring his contributions to the cause of Communism. He insisted that no one except Stalin, Beria, and the antiparty group had known during Stalin's lifetime of any injustices. He contradicted this by praising Mikhail Sholokhov for having remonstrated with Stalin as early as 1932 about the brutalities of the collectivization campaign, and compounded the confusion by claiming that despite his own ignorance of any injustice he had twice thwarted Stalin's plans for further purges. He also flatly rejected the possibility of a conflict between fathers and sons under socialist conditions.

Khrushchev was still smarting as a result of Cuba, but there were other contributing causes which precipitated this explosion. It followed fairly shortly after the press began to discuss the politically sensitive problems of guilt for Stalin's crimes and the father and son conflict.

In addition, Khrushchev was vulnerable to criticism on the grounds that his cultural policy had led to adverse consequences which apparently he had not even envisioned. He was also under increasing pressure from the Chinese.

The ensuing witch hunt conducted by conservative writers and artists lasted until late April when a slight moderation was discernible. One factor which may have contributed to this change was the sharp criticism voiced in the west. In addition, Kozlov's influence was removed at about that time by a crippling stroke, and on 17 April, Togliatti, speaking for the Italian Communist Party, voiced public disagreement with the Soviet hard line in culture. By the time of the June plenum a good deal of the conviction had gone out of the drive for conformity.

#### The Regime's Reversion To Neutrality

In the fifteen months since June 1963, the Soviet leaders have been preoccupied with other problems and there have been no major public statements on cultural policy. Ilichev, head of the party's Ideological Commission, has spoken sporadically on the subject, but his speeches are infrequently published and the texts, when available, have given very little guidance to authors as how to treat the Stalin era. In practice, the regime seems to be trying to strike a balance between liberals and conservatives but it has intervened

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only sporadically in cultural affairs.

In August 1963, Khrushchev authorized the publication of "Vasily Terkin in Paradise," Aleksandr Tvardovsky's satire on Stalinist literary bureaucrats. In this poem, Tvardovsky treated the problem of Stalin himself with discretion, and Khrushchev--as he has done in the past--may have given his approval as a personal favor to the author. It had the effect, however, of re-opening the subject of Stalin in literature, and the writers have returned to discussing the suffering of the Stalin years and ignoring Stalin's contributions to the cause of Communism. The theme of the father-son conflict has also reappeared, despite Khrushchev's flat denial of its validity in contemporary Soviet society. The contention that Stalin's crimes were known during his lifetime has been accepted by the conservatives who now are concentrating on proving that efforts were made to struggle against the mistakes of the "cult."

In the heated controversy which began last December over the Lenin prize for literature, the issue was not artistic values but whether such a struggle should have been conducted, and if so, how and by whom. The controversy was nominally resolved in April by the award of the prize to a Ukrainian novelist chiefly notable for the fact that his novel had been ignored by both liberal and conservative critics. The award had little effect on the quarrel,

which continued through the past summer.

Most of the writers who were harshly criticized in the crackdown of 1963 have made their way back into print. Even Viktor Nekrasov, whose expulsion from the party was demanded by Khrushchev in June 1963, reappeared in print only six months later. Several new poems by Yevtushenko were published in February 1964 and two more appeared in early September.

The graphic arts and music, although potentially nonconformist, have never exhibited the vitality that literature has in attempts to break out of their Stalinist straitjacket. As a result of the regime's current stance of relative neutrality, the conservatives are still in control in both fields. The only significant development in the past year in the graphic arts--Ilya Glazunov's one-man showing in June--appears to have been an isolated event rather than a precedent for a milder policy.

Glazunov is a nonconformist painter but his style harks back to iconography rather than to the abstractionism which so irritates Khrushchev. The exhibit was apparently organized with the consent of the Ministry of Culture, under public pressure from liberal writers and with some editorial support from Izvestia. It took place over the bitter opposition of the conservative leaders of the Artists' Union who have adamantly refused to admit Glazunov as a member. The significance

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of the exhibit lay chiefly in the tremendous interest it aroused among Soviet intellectuals, many of whom do not find Glazunov's style particularly appealing but who are nevertheless determined to encourage any nonconformity in the arts. A deputy minister of culture, who rushed to the exhibit at the last minute to arbitrate the quarrel over whether it should open at all, was clearly appalled by the would-be viewers massed in the street outside the museum and reportedly was heard to mutter that he had no choice but to open the show to avoid a scandal.

Possibly in recognition of the intellectuals' interest in nonconformist art, the journal Kommunist this summer opened the door a crack to experimentation and innovation, by attacking Chinese conservatism in the arts, but there has been no observable reaction as yet among Soviet painters, sculptors, or musicians.

Reflections of the Sino-Soviet Controversy

Soviet press accounts of a meeting of the party's Ideological Commission in mid-May presented an evenly balanced official line which stressed both the dangers of "bourgeois" revisionism and the dogmatism of the Chinese "splitters." Immediately after the meeting, however,

Ilichev briefed the assembled intellectuals in a closed session on the fight with Peiping, leaving the impression among his audience that dogmatism constituted the greater threat.

By June, Soviet spokesmen were publicly defending Khrushchev's cultural policy against Chinese attacks, thus indirectly strengthening the liberal Soviet intellectuals' position. Kommunist charged that Chinese literature portrays "not the actual reality in China but an idealized reality that the Chinese leaders would like to pass off as real." Liberal Soviets who have fought the glossing over of defects in Soviet life demanded by the doctrine of "socialist realism" are undoubtedly heartened by this definition of Chinese sin. Another Kommunist editorial accused Chinese leaders of regarding art as nothing more than an appendage of politics, leaving the implication that art might have some other function than to assist the party in building Communism.

Nonconformist Intellectuals And Apolitical Youth

The intellectual ferment that has been visible in the Soviet Union has not been expressed in terms of the party versus the intelligentsia, but rather in terms of conservative elements versus liberal elements --whether party functionaries

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or party or nonparty literary figures. Stalin's monolithic party discipline has been eroded by Khrushchev's own actions in de-Stalinization. Moreover, the authority of cultural apparatchiks, many of whom are conservative hold-overs from the Stalin years, has also been undermined by Khrushchev's backing and filling in the cultural field. Certain party concepts such as socialist realism have been similarly eroded.

There is some question of how much the Soviet public shares the concerns of the intelligentsia. [redacted]

[redacted] the trial this spring of the young poet, Iosif Brodsky, on charges of "parasitism," many of the spectators were totally in sympathy with the court and the prosecution, and expressed hostility to all intellectuals as leeches who contributed no useful labor to society. Westerners returning from the USSR have frequently reported a tremendous gulf between the Soviet intelligentsia--which includes most white-collar professionals, regardless of their intellectual interests--and the workers. Some Soviet intellectuals, expressing concern for the future, have also commented on this gulf. The behavior of the audience at the Brodsky trial suggests that many of these workers, even if they knew about it, would

not be sympathetic with the intellectuals' soul-searching about guilt for the Stalin years.

Party and Komsomol authorities discussed the problem of apolitical youth at a Komsomol central committee plenum in March. According to the published account, the session was little more than a play-back of the party plenum in June 1963 and again with no remedial actions taken.

The Komsomol boss spoke recently about the dangers of bourgeois ideology, but he also warned Komsomol officials who see "only danger in an expansion of cultural contacts with the West and think only about guarding young people from it. This is incorrect." He failed to explain how the young were to be protected from infection without being isolated from contacts. His speech was typical of the sporadic and half-hearted efforts made by the regime to deal with the problem of maintaining both ideological purity, as the party demanded at the June 1963 plenum, and a detente policy in foreign relations with increased economic and cultural exchanges with the West. [redacted]

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